By and About PHS Pharmacists

At the October 2nd PharmPac meeting, I heard our Communications Section talk about their accomplishments. Certainly, the PharmPAC's web site is one of them. As I listened further, I heard that the web site has a section that includes articles by and about PHS pharmacists. It links you directly to the article. Currently, there are eight articles on the site. As I listened to the Recruitment Section give their annual report, I heard we now have 873 Commissioned Corps pharmacists in the category.

Many of you have heard me say, "if you can't measure it, you can't manage it." So I did the math. Eight divided by 873, multiplied by 100 is less than 1% of our Commissioned Corps pharmacists who we have published or written about. It only gets worse by adding the Civil Service pharmacists. I know that we have talented, innovative, interesting pharmacists in our ranks. I am certain that some of our pharmacists are involved in unique work or research. We may have missed some articles. I think we can do better than this, don't you?

Publishing is one of the most efficient ways to disseminate information to people. Consider that the *Journal of the American Pharmacists' Association* has a circulation of 44,000. Publishing is also an excellent career development tool for pharmacists. Consider the skills acquired during the process: planning, collecting data or references, writing, responding to peer review, and reviewing galley proofs. Astute hiring officials look at a resume that includes publications, and recognize that the applicant has valuable skills and abilities.

What interest's publishers? They look for new ideas, or studies in understudied populations. They like old stories with new angles; a manuscript on the common cold probably isn't too attractive, but emphasizes recent studies of new agents used to improve symptoms, and it sparkles. Often, they look for anniversary articles. Editors also need more information on drug use in aging populations.

How can you start? First, you should look for a mentor, especially if you plan to conduct a study. An experienced colleague can help you identify pitfalls; nothing is worse than completing a huge project only to have a design flaw pointed out. And, someone who has published can help you with the new vocabulary you'll need to use (like manuscript, call out, header, galley proofs....). A writer or co-author that has been through multiple reviews can help you write in the active voice (which sounds simple, but is incredibly difficult when you're accustomed to writing government documents). Finally, your mentor can coach your new relationship with the editor, or even put you in contact with important people.

What do you need to remember? Even if you have a solid clinical reputation, when you start writing, you're a junior writer. You need to put your ego away, and approach each step as a learning experience. Style requirements are usually rigid, and your manuscript will either be rejected or boomerang back to you until you comply. Peer review can be brutally honest. As upsetting as peer review can be, it forces you to look at possible alternatives, and always leads to a better manuscript.

So I'm challenging this category: Let's increase the number of articles on the website to at least

40 articles within the next year.